

STATINTL

# He Left His Heart Up There, And Went Back to Get It

By JOSEPH WERSHBA

**T**ODAY IS FRANCIS GARY POWERS' BIRTHDAY. He is 31. And today he goes on trial in Moscow for espionage. If convicted, he faces a sentence ranging from seven years in prison to execution by a firing squad.

In his own country, he could technically face a charge of having divulged the secrets of his U-2 flights over the Soviet Union, an offense punishable by up to 10 years in jail, \$10,000 in fines, or both.

There is a fine line between espionage (that's when the other side does it) and intelligence (when your side does it). Whichever it is, Francis Gary Powers holds the distinction of being the first man in modern history whose government has in effect admitted he was a spy.

His other distinction is that he is the least melodramatic of men. Curiously, however, he set off the most melodramatic of long-range psychoanalysis when his plane was shot down over Soviet territory on May 1. "Why didn't Powers commit suicide to escape capture?" some Americans asked. "Everything alive wants to live," said Nikita Khrushchev in his new role of sympathetic humanitarian.

The ejection seat of Powers' U-2 was said to have been wired to blow up plane and pilot. Powers shed no light on this report: "I could not use the ejection seat because of (gravity) forces," he wrote to his wife from Lubyanka Prison, explaining why he had parachuted from the plane.

Another line to his wife, however, probably does more than anything else to explain the character of Francis Gary Powers—"I am sincerely sorry to be the cause of any suffering or pain that you may be having because of the situation I am presently in."

The one thing almost everyone remembers about Powers from childhood on is that he made little impression on anybody. He was quiet and shy. Nobody recalls him dating a girl either in high school or college. His boyish qualities appealed more to the mother than to the daughter. Characteristically, he met his wife through her mother, a cafeteria worker at an air base where Powers was stationed.

The Central Intelligence Agency and Lockheed Aircraft found other useful qualities in Powers besides shyness. He was reliable. He was steady and he was intelligent. He loved to fly. ("I left my heart up there, Pa," he told his father after his first flight at 14 "and I'm going back to get it.") He liked adventure and knew how to keep things to himself.

These are minimum requirements for pilots making reconnaissance intelligence flights. They are equally minimum attributes of craftsmen who ply the trade of professional espionage.

Powers, today a young man in the physical prime of his life, graced with good looks and dark wavy hair, standing 5-foot-8 and weighing 170, was born on Aug. 17, 1929, in the mountain town of Jenkins, Ky. He grew up across the Virginia border in Harmon and Grundy. He had five sisters. He was the only son. "He was a daddy's boy," his father, Oliver, recalls. "I told his mother, 'You raise the girls however you want, but I'll raise the boy.' And I did."

His father had been a coal miner 15 years and has run a one-man shoe-repair shop for the last 22. "I didn't ever want him to be a coal miner and he didn't want to be a cobbler," the father says, "so we hoped he'd become a doctor."

Young Powers was an average student at Grundy High, played some football and then attended Milligan College in Tennessee, taking a pre-med course and graduating in 1950. Then he lost interest in medicine. He enlisted in the Air Force, rose to first lieutenant and became a jet fighter pilot. It was the time of the Korean War, but he was not assigned to combat.

It was while he was stationed at a SAC base near Albany, Ga., that he met and married Barbara Gay Brown, the attractive brunet whose poignant yet dignified defense of her husband in Moscow has aroused world-wide sympathy.

Barbara didn't want any children as long as Powers was a flier—and they have had none. Two years after their marriage, Powers resigned from the Air Force to take a civilian job with Lockheed. His pay as first lieutenant had been about \$625 a month. With Lockheed, he began at \$1,500 a month and with bonuses for special missions was last earning about \$2,500. He and Barbara were based at Adana, Turkey. To his family back home in Pound, Va., he wrote that he was flying weather missions. Barbara may not have known any more than that either.

Shortly after May 1, 1960, Francis Gary Powers' "weather missions" became clearer to his wife, his family and to the world. "The people here tell me that I am lucky to be alive," Powers writes from Lubyanka Prison, adding: "But only time will tell me whether or not I was lucky."

## Closeup



**Francis G.  
Powers**

The U-2 Pilot